

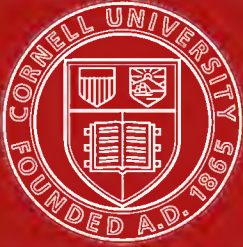
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OLIPHANT

A visit to the Taipings.

1863.

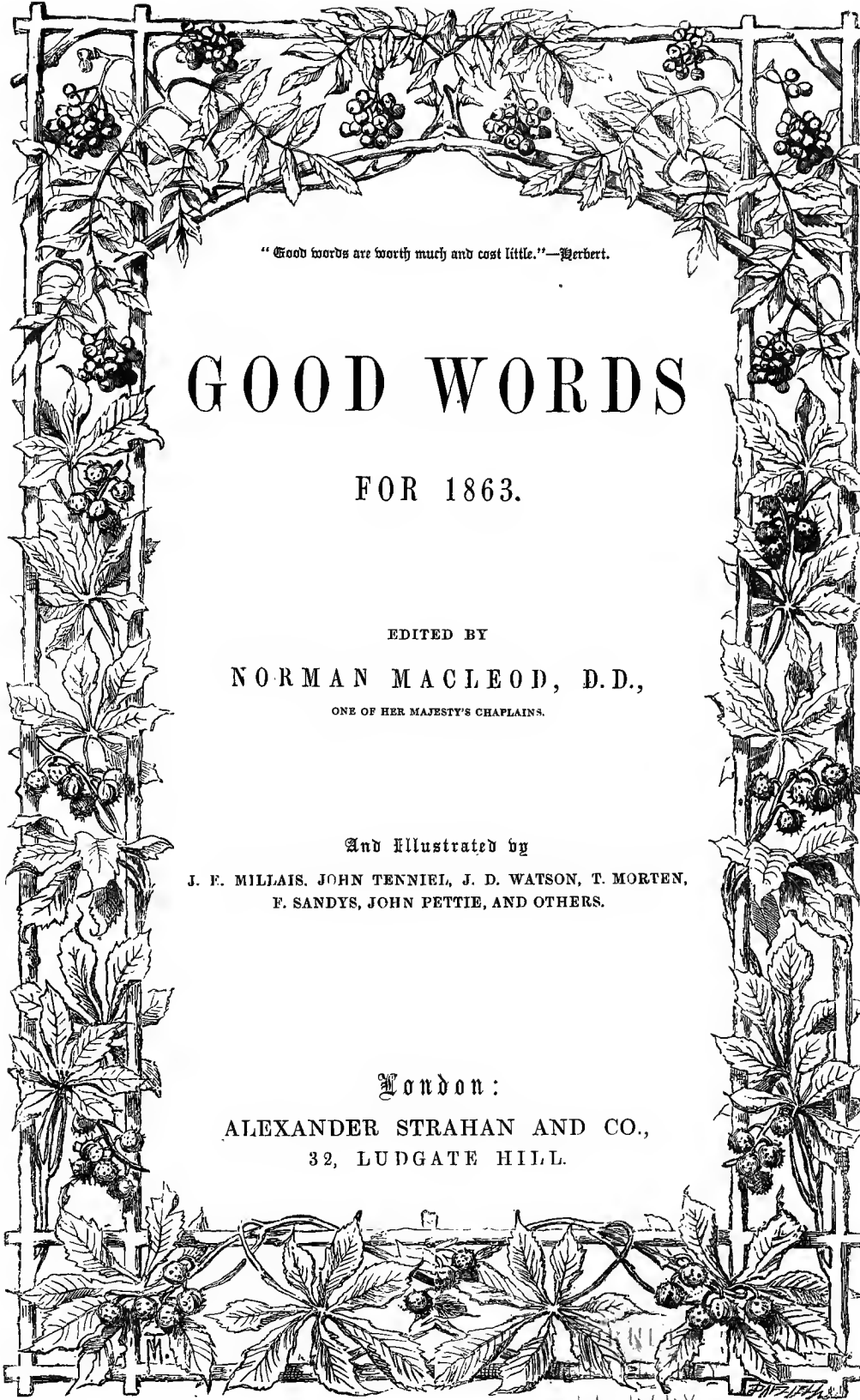


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"Good words are worth much and cost little."—Herbert.

GOOD WORDS

FOR 1863.

EDITED BY

NORMAN MACLEOD, D.D.,

ONE OF HER MAJESTY'S CHAPLAINS.

And Illustrated by

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F. SANDYS, JOHN PETTIE, AND OTHERS.

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"For service to-morrow?" mechanically repeated Mr. Dudley.

"It will be the 1st of November, sir; All Saints' Day."

In his great trouble, the rector had positively forgotten the fact. For once in his life the coming day, marked in the Church calendar, had slipped his memory. "To be sure, to be sure," he cried. "Clear the evergreens out at once, John. It is dusk now, and you may escape spectators."

Old John took the keys, and made the best of his way to the church. He had barely entered it, when a sharp knocking came sounding right in his face, inside the vestry door.

"Lawk a mercy!" ejaculated he, startled half out of his senses.

The knocking came again, sharper than before. It may be that a thought of ghosts crossed John's mind, causing him to hesitate; to doubt whether he should not run out of the church, bellowing, and alarm the neighbourhood. But ghosts don't knock, or speak either; and this one was calling out, in unmistakably stentorian tones, "Let me out! Open the door!"

The vestry door—it has, however, been explained, that though called the vestry door, it was only the door of a small place leading to the vestry—opened from the outside alone. The clerk turned the latch, and—saw Mr. Olliver.

"Heaven be good to us!" he repeated. "Then—are—you—not at the bottom of the mill-stream, sir?"

"I hope not," replied Mr. Olliver. "Am I supposed to be there, John?"

"Well, yes," said John. "The drags have been at work all day; but they haven't fished you up yet."

He sat down on a gravestone to overget his astonishment, and stared at Mr. Olliver. That gentleman did not present a very reputable appearance, inasmuch as the front of his black evening suit was a mass of mud, which had dried on.

"Have you been in there all this time, sir?"

"Yes, I have; since you quitted the church last night, after decorating it."

The story was soon told. It was a very simple one. In passing over the bridge the previous night, Mr. Olliver by some means let fall his cane. Making a spring to catch it, he fell down upon the muddy bank, hands and knees and clothes, and slid downwards in the slippery mud. The cane went floating along the stream, and Mr. Olliver was a sight to be seen in his state of mud. There was no time to look after the cane; poor Mrs. Key was in urgent need of her medicines, and he hastened on by the path leading through the churchyard. The lights and voices in the church attracted him to enter; he knew what they were doing, that merry group, and he intended to treat himself to a secret peep. But, at the same moment, the inner doors opened; Georgina Balme came forth; and Mr. Olliver, not caring to be seen

in his muddy attire, slipped inside the open door of the vestry passage. There he waited until the coast should be clear again; and there he got—shut in. Old John closed the door in passing it; and it was only by the silence that supervened that Mr. Olliver awoke at length to the unpleasant fact that he was fast, and the church empty. He tried the vestry door, but that was also fast—thanks to the clerk's habit of locking every place up; he shouted and knocked, but without much hope of being heard. In fact, there was no probability that he could be heard; the passage was an inner passage, and any noise made in it would not be likely to penetrate outside. And there he had remained, with the best patience he could call up.

"I should think you are hungry, sir," cried John, unromantically. "What a blessed sight you'll be for Miss Annis!"

She—Annis—was still sitting on the sofa as her father had left her, alone in the room. Mr. Olliver went in quietly; he had gone straight up from the church, in spite of his muddy clothes.

"Annis!"

She started up at the voice, her eyes staring fitfully. Did she think it his ghost,—as perhaps old John had thought? But there was no time to give way to fear, for Mr. Olliver caught her to him, and sheltered her on his bosom.

"I am not dead, my darling. I hear you have been fearing it." And Annis burst into delicious tears.

The news spread through the house, and everybody in it came flocking in. Mr. Olliver thought his hand would have been shaken off. Lady Katherine seized hold of him, and—gave him a hearty kiss.

"This past night and day have taught me to appreciate you, Mr. Olliver, if I never did before. I shall give her to you with all my whole heart."

He laughed with pleasure, and grasped Lady Katherine's hand in his. "Does anybody know how Mrs. Key is?" he inquired.

"Better. She—"

A joyous peal of ringing bells burst out from the church, hard by. The clerk, on his own responsibility, had set some ringers to work. But he had not remained with them, for there was his happy old face peeping into the room, and singling out the rector.

"About them evergreens, sir? Be they to be cleared out now, or to be left for to-morrow morning?"

Mr. Dudley turned his eyes on Mr. Olliver, on his daughter's blushing face, and read the signs.

"You may as well let them be, John," said he. "I suppose a marriage celebrated on All Saints Day will stand good?"

"I expect it will," replied John. And he went to help the ringers.

"How merciful has God been to me this night!" was the concluding thought of Lady Katherine Dudley.

A VISIT TO THE TAIPINGS.

In the early part of June 1861, I found myself unavoidably detained for some weeks at Shanghai, and was glad to avail myself of the kind invitation of Captain Dew, of H. M. S. "Encounter," to accompany him on a trip, one object of which was to visit a city recently captured by the rebels, with the view of communicating with their chief, another to explore the country in the neighbourhood of Ningpo, and ascertain the rebel position in that district. For some time past rumours had been current in Shanghai of the proximity of these "troublesome insects," as the rebels are styled in mandarin phraseology, and now the capture of the town of Chapoo seemed to warrant the conclusion that an advance on Ningpo was in prospect, as the wealth of that city, and the immunity from rebel attacks which it had enjoyed hitherto, rendered it a tempting prize. Here had numbers of the inhabitants of the surrounding country found a refuge, whatever was saved from the sack of Hangchow, the capital of the province, now in possession of the rebels, and one of the richest cities in the empire, had been placed in Ningpo for security, and the gradual approach of the rebels from different quarters, but all converging upon this rich centre, filled the inhabitants with alarm. It was not, however, to protect the accumulated wealth of the province, or to inspire confidence merely into the minds of its possessors, that an English man-of-war was sent there; the European community, though not large, would be exposed to the utmost danger in the event of the occupation of the city, and it was considered advisable to inform the rebels that the capture by them of a port open to foreign trade, would be regarded by us as an act of hostility towards foreigners.

The most accessible rebel chief, under the circumstances, was the gentleman who had first captured, and now commanded at Chapoo, and that once important mercantile emporium was our destination in the first instance. Situated on the Bay of Hangchow, and connected with that city, of which it was the port, by the Grand Canal, it derived its importance partly from that circumstance, and partly from the fact of the Grand Canal debouching at this point into the sea, so that it was the southern terminus of that vast traffic which in former times traversed the great internal artery of the empire, and fed Peking itself. For many years past the navigation of the Grand Canal has been completely destroyed, and the only commercial privilege which still invested Chapoo with some importance, was its limited trade with Japan. This was the only point upon the Chinese coast with which the exclusive islanders permitted traffic, and that only in the most restricted sense. Seven junks annually sailed from Chapoo to Nagasaki, where they were put under the strictest surveil-

lance, their crews jealously watched, and not, unless under very exceptional circumstances, allowed to land. As soon as the cargoes, consisting usually of sugar, had been landed, the junks reloaded with edible seaweed, and other Japanese produce, and returned to Chapoo, not to revisit the Empire of the Sun until the following year. This traffic has now come to an end; but even under any circumstances the opening of Shanghai and Ningpo to foreign trade must have been a death-blow to the commercial prosperity of Chapoo.

Rounding a projecting promontory in the grey dawn of morning, the first indication we received of our proximity to Chapoo was rather significant than encouraging. Here and there a swollen and disfigured Chinaman floated face downwards on the yellow waters of the Yang-tse, and reminded me of those horrible sights so familiar to dwellers on the banks of the Hoogly; but these were the evidences of rebel cruelty, not of a religious observance, and the rotting carcasses which once or twice grazed our bows were those of an innocent peasantry who had fallen victims to Taiping ferocity. The city of Chapoo is situated upon a plain, but immediately to its right rise two hills, three or four hundred feet high, one of which is crowned with a small fort, its walls now gay with the flaunting banners of the rebel host. We dropped anchor immediately opposite this fort, which was within range of our guns, but the shallowness of the water did not permit of too near an approach to the shore. Instantly a great commotion was visible among the rebels; the unusual apparition of an English frigate and gun-boat filled them with consternation. A crowd assembled at the principal gateway, heads appeared peeping over the walls, messengers passed to and fro between the fort and the town; their doubt as to the object of our visit being only equalled by our uncertainty as to the nature of our reception. Former experience had warned us that a flag of truce was not to be relied on in our intercourse with these gentry. The last time I had had the honour of communicating with them under the shadow of a white table-cloth, we were received by a salvo of artillery, which killed and wounded three of our number, and involved a brisk action of an hour and a half; and not a fortnight before, Captain Dew had been fired at when proceeding, under a flag of truce, in his gig, to deliver a letter stuck in the fork of a bamboo, and had been obliged to retreat under a heavy fire, with his mission unaccomplished. In fact, opening communication with a rebel chief was an operation by no means unattended with danger. So the decks were cleared, the guns run out, and in a few moments we were prepared to meet the rebels on their own terms.

Captain Dew and Mr. Alabaster, the interpreter, with a white flag prominently displayed, got into the boat and pulled ashore, while we anxiously watched his proceedings through our telescopes; and Mr. Cornwall, the first lieutenant, since unfortunately killed at the capture of Ningpo, kept the guns accurately trained upon a crowd of rebels so as to be able to resent, with a broadside, any treachery to the captain.

Meantime the Taipings seemed to watch our proceedings with no less interest and curiosity; and as Captain Dew, attended only by Mr. Alabaster, and the coxswain, bearing the flag of truce, began to scale the hill, a number of warriors, carrying gingalls, matchlocks, and flags in bright-coloured garments, came vapouring out after the usual manner of warlike Chinamen, and apparently in no very amicable mood. Steadily the three Englishmen clambered up the hill, while the rebels seemed uncertain whether to fire at them or not. Anxiously we strained our eyes through our telescopes. Every man was at his place at the guns. We could see the rebel nearest Captain Dew blowing the fusee of his matchlock, and the coxswain deprecatingly waving his flag, and more rebels with warlike attitudes closing round; but still they did not fire. Then we saw Captain Dew extend his hand to the man with the matchlock and the fusee. Was he begging for mercy? No! he had seized the lighted fusee; he was lighting his cigar with it. The rebels were probably as much astonished as ourselves by the coolness of this proceeding; at all events, it produced the desired effect of restoring confidence; and in a few minutes more Captain Dew had disappeared within the gateway, and we saw him no more. Shortly after, the boat came back with a message inviting a small party of us on shore.

Three years had elapsed since I had explored the suburb of Chapoo, then composed of crowded, busy lanes, now a mass of blackened ruins, deserted save by a mangy cur or two. Then I had stood on the summit of the hill from which the rebel flags were now waving, and looked over a boundless plain of yellow crops, soon to be gathered in by an industrious and peaceful population; now, far as eye could reach on every side, the crops had again ripened, but the country was deserted. Not a wreath of blue smoke curled heavenward through all the broad landscape. The food of thousands was rotting where it grew, and thousands who had abandoned their homesteads were dying for want of it. Death at the hands of the rebels, or death by starvation, had been the only alternatives of this wretched peasantry, and they chose the latter. There is probably, at the best of times, more poverty and abject misery in China than in any other country on the face of the globe; and it was heart-rending to think that the teeming produce of thousands of acres of this rich alluvial land would relieve none of it. How little could those who had hopefully planted in the early

spring have foreseen such a catastrophe! How many years will suffice to repair the injuries of days! Stumbling over the blackened embers of burnt houses, picking our way through brickbats and miscellaneous rubbish as best we might, with here and there a human bone or a tattered garment protruding, to tell of deeds of violence, we passed through the demolished suburb, without meeting a soul or seeing a single house in a state of preservation. On approaching the city walls, the scene was very different. They were swarming with workmen. Those of the peasantry who had not escaped or been killed were impressed by the rebels into their service, and were now working hard at the fortifications. Men, women, and children were crawling up and down the steep inclines with baskets full of earth, excavating, pulling down, or building up. The rebels themselves, with long matted hair (for a pigtail is an abomination to a rebel), countenances brutalized by long familiarity with scenes of blood, and garments of the brightest colours, made free use of sticks as they urged the wretched labourers to the work. They regarded us with ill-favoured glances, and, though not venturing to offer opposition, allowed us to scramble to the top of the walls as best we might, by means of slippery ladders and steps cut in the muddy bank of the surrounding moat, which we traversed on a single plank. More working parties were engaged on the top of the walls, and the conquerors were evidently determined that no future army should take the city as easily as they had done themselves.

At last we found a man to pilot us along the ruined and deserted streets to the Yamun or public building in which the chief held his court; a small, half-ruined collection of rooms and courts, all crowded with filthy Taipings, who did not abstain from pressing after us into the chamber in which the great man received us. Dressed in a long robe of yellow, with a handkerchief round his head, and a valuable pearl in it, he differed in no respect from the ordinary type of low caste Chinaman. His manners were rude and unpolished, and his evident desire was to impress upon our minds his own importance, and the perfect indifference with which he regarded the foreigner. He offered us tea and chairs, but had no more idea of good breeding, according to the Chinese standard, than if he had been a New York rowdy. A fortnight had scarcely elapsed since he had taken the city, and he was still elated by his recent success. In reply to my inquiry of the number of persons slaughtered, he said that he had no accurate idea, but that his men had been employed for two whole days, from sunrise to sunset, in putting the population of the city to death. "But," I said, "I suppose you spared the women?" "Oh, no," he answered, "we killed them all." "And how many did you lose?" "Four or five of my men were killed."

The atmosphere, moral and physical, was too

pestilential to remain in this ruffian's company longer than necessary, and while Captain Dew was concluding the interview, I amused myself buying jade ornaments, and other articles which the rebels had looted. Some of these men produced bags with plundered jewellery and women's ornaments, but I saw nothing of great value, though the prices asked proved that money was abundant among them, and that they had sacked the unfortunate city of Chapoo to no small advantage. The sickening stench, the prevalence of cutaneous diseases, and the impudent familiarity with which they crowded round one, induced me to curtail my researches into their stolen property. Indeed, every now and then, the idea of one's utterly helpless condition, two miles away from the ship, in the midst of a horde of savages, who lived on murder and rapine, and regarded all foreigners as their natural enemies, obtruded itself rather disagreeably. On our way back to the ship by another route, we passed the place of public punishment. There was standing a crucifix, upon which a man had been recently crucified, and two wretched victims were undergoing the punishment of the Kung, which consisted in their sitting with their heads passed through the centre of a large board. Except the rebel host, numbered by their leader at 5000 men, and the country people pressed into service on the fortifications, the city was totally deserted. A month before it had contained a population estimated at nearly 100,000. It is part of the rebel policy to commit the most awful atrocities wherever they go, as by this means they inspire so much terror beforehand, that at the very first rumour of their approach, the whole country is abandoned by the terrified peasantry; and the imperial troops, infected by the universal panic, too often lose heart, desert their posts, and the cities fall an easy prey into the hands of the rebels.

During the first years of the rebellion in China, delusions prevailed in this country with reference to the religious tenets of the Taipings, which have fortunately been long since dispelled. We received vague rumours of a sect of Christian propagandists, whose chief object was to overturn the existing system of philosophy and superstition, and substitute in its stead a pure and ennobling creed. The natural effect of this impression was to create in our minds a strong feeling of sympathy in their favour; and witnessing as they did constant instances of cruelty and misrule on the part of the Government, a large section of the British community in China watched with interest the progress of the rebellion throughout the provinces. A closer acquaintance with the Taipings proved how utterly erroneous had been the impressions conceived of their mission. Their leader, a man of low origin, who had picked up the outlines of the Christian scheme, grafted them upon a miserable and blasphemous fabrication of his own, and arrogating to himself a divine origin and supernatural

powers, succeeded to some extent at first in imposing upon the credulity of his followers. I doubt, however, whether a single Taiping believes anything now. In various conversations which I have had with individuals on the subject, I have not found one who could give any definite idea of his creed, beyond the fact that they offered some prayer before eating. The religious publications of the Taipings are absurd incomprehensible effusions, embodying no grand sentiments, transparently the productions of ignorant and uneducated men who have mixed up texts of the Bible with their own puerile composition. There is an absence of that fanaticism among them which has always distinguished religious propagandists. However erroneous their creeds, some persons are always to be found who are sincere and enthusiastic. So far from there being a proselytizing spirit among the Taipings, they demand from those they spare nothing but work. No Chinaman who has been a captive knows more of their religion when he leaves them, than he did at first. Religious instruction is unknown among them; nor, so far as I could learn, do they ever meet for worship. I am willing to believe that in the earlier stages of the rebellion some honesty of political purpose may have animated some of the chiefs; and such at that period was the weakness and corruption of the existing Government, that, had the movement been conducted by wise and patriotic men, it would have achieved without difficulty the overthrow of the dynasty. If there were any nobler aspirations connected with it than those of plunder, they were soon extinguished, the country-people who would at that time gladly have accorded their sympathies to the founders of a new dynasty, found themselves the victims of the most frightful persecution. The scum of a population of four hundred millions rallied round standards which waved them on to murder and rapine. The Taipings soon became as destitute of political as of religious principle. The chiefs quarrelled among themselves. The original objects of the movement, if it ever had any, were forgotten amid internal dissensions, but still, like vultures flocking to a carcase, crowds of ruffians poured in to join them, and the would-be founders of the Taiping dynasty degenerated into robber-chiefs, whose only difficulty now was to find subsistence for their hosts. Like locust-swarms they move over the face of the country; the new creed and the new dynasty, which at first gave a semblance of dignity to the movement, are things of the past. If ever there were men of respectability or intelligence to be found among them, they have been all extinguished. The chiefs are coolies, their followers outcasts, who were enemies to society from the first. Moving in vast numbers, they crush all opposition by the impetuosity of the rush with which they sweep over a fresh country with fire and sword, carrying desolation before them. The captive women they divide among themselves;

the men are put into the front rank, and sacrificed whenever fighting becomes necessary. I have looked over a country where heavy clouds of smoke, ascending from burning homesteads, hung over it like a pall, and I have seen a whole population, men, women, and children, abandoning all they held dear, and flying, panic-stricken, from the destruction that was overtaking them. When they have entirely exhausted the resources of one tract of country, they move on to another. The great terror they inspire, the large masses in which they move, and a certain reckless daring engendered by their lawless life, almost always insure success: large towns are deserted before they are attacked, flight, not defence, is the instinct alike of people and of troops; the mandarins and chief authorities lead the way, and there is a general *sauve qui peut*. At the end of a year or so, the country is exhausted, the rebels move elsewhere, and the Government, with a great flourish of trumpets at having ejected them, resumes possession of the desolated waste.

We may always be sure that wherever there are rebels there are a certain number of Imperial troops swaggering in the neighbourhood, who have not the slightest intention, however, of risking their skins. Thus, on our return to the ship, a fleet of sixteen Imperial war-junks, which had been lying for some time past in a secure nook on the coast, sailed bravely up, and informed us that they would be delighted to co-operate in the capture of the town, if we would lead off. This proposal Captain Dew of course declined, and the Imperial fleet returned to their anchorage, to draw their pay and write magniloquent descriptions of imaginary combats with the rebels, not unlike those we have been in the habit of receiving occasionally from another quarter.

At mid-day on the following day, we were anchored beneath the walls of Ningpo, and, as on the occasion of my former sojourn in that city I had neglected to visit an interesting monastery in the neighbourhood, we hired a couple of native boats, stocked them with the necessary provender, and started one night, after dinner, on our trip. These boats or sampans as they are called, are covered in, and we can manage to make very comfortable beds by spreading mattresses on the floor. Our rest, however, is not destined to be undisturbed; first we have to get from the river, through a Chinese lock, into the canal. The process consists of winding the boat, by means of a windlass, up an inclined plane to the required height,—a less exciting proceeding than going down on the return voyage, when we plump into the river with a rush. Having safely accomplished this feat, our nerves receive sundry shocks as we bump against other boats in the dark, or run against the buttresses of narrow bridges. However, with the dawn of day, our troubles come to an end, only, however, to be renewed in another form; for now comes the difficulty of finding moun-

tain chairs and bearers. These are most primitive contrivances, and consist of two wooden boards, like the seats of a swing, suspended between two bamboos, and carried by two men. The little village at which we stop is considerably agitated by our pertinacity in insisting upon these being forthcoming; but after all we do not avail ourselves very readily of this mode of conveyance, for the air is fresh, the scenery charming, and we walk briskly along the paved causeway between fields of rice and groves of bamboos, now and then obtaining, from the tops of the hills, lovely views over the country stretching below. At the end of a six-mile walk we reached Tien-tung, where we found a picturesque rambling building, with some pretensions to architecture, nestling among hills, embowered amid shady groves of lofty trees, filled with greasy monks, who set a room apart for our accommodation, instructed us in the mysteries of Buddhist monastic life, and showed no indisposition to receive remuneration for their services. Except in the solemn grandeur of its woods, and the beauty of its situation, Tien-tung offered no feature of interest to the visitor familiar with similar institutions, which are to be seen to greater perfection in the sacred island of Pootoo, and I anticipated more excitement from an expedition projected to the town of Yu-yao, said to be in possession of the rebels, and distant by river about thirty miles from Ningpo.

Our return voyage, which occupied a night, was unmarked by any incident; and on the following day we proceeded to make the arrangements necessary to carry out the expedition. As the navigation of the river was intricate and little known, the "Encounter" was followed by the "Kestrel;" and we soon excited the curiosity of the people on the shores, who had not seen a devil ship pass their retired hamlets for twenty years. The French Admiral, since killed in operations against the rebels near Shanghai, accompanied us in one of his own gun-boats, and we followed the windings of the little known river until the hills closed in upon it, and charming valleys opened up on either side, their slopes clothed with the graceful feathering bamboo. Here the depth of water did not suffice for the further progress of the "Encounter," and we proceeded the remaining distance in a gun-boat.

Yu-yao is distant from Ningpo about thirty-five miles, and was the furthest point reached by our troops in 1841; since that time it has been rarely visited by foreigners, and the arrival of two gun-boats produced some commotion among the inhabitants. We were glad to learn that the reports of rebel proximity were false, and the chief authority, although he admitted his inability to defend the place, did not seem to anticipate an attack. Yu-yao is a small, somewhat dilapidated-looking town, and owes its importance chiefly to its position as a good base from which to operate against Ningpo. It was

useless to warn the Chinese authorities to prepare for rebel attacks; nothing could rouse them from their apathy short of the appearance of the Taipings, when they invariably deserted their posts, without attempting to defend them. In vain did we impress upon the Prefect of Ningpo, on our return to that city, the importance of having ammunition as well as guns. In vain did we point out to him that guns which were not mounted, or had their vents plugged up, or their trunnions broken off, were useless. It was a thankless task to show him portions of the wall which wanted repair, to recommend him to drill his troops, and have the walls permanently manned. He shrugged his shoulders and sipped tea, and the result was, that in a very short time after our visit, Yu-yao and Ningpo were both in the hands of the rebels, who perpetrated the greatest cruelties on the inhabitants, enriched themselves by wholesale plundering, until at last their conduct towards foreigners compelled Captain Dew to take the city by storm, and drive them out of it.

Of all the dashing achievements which have

signalized our naval operations in China, nothing has happened more brilliant than this exploit. With the assistance of only two gun-boats, besides his own ship's crew, Captain Dew did not hesitate to storm the city walls, though defended by thousands of rebels, and succeeded, after a short but bloody struggle against odds almost overwhelming, in putting them to flight, and handing the place over once more to the Chinese authorities. The task of protecting their cities for them, and covering the incapacity of their own officials, will, however, no longer fall upon our Government. The Chinese Government has lately determined to maintain, at their own expense, an efficient fleet, to be officered by foreigners. It is very flattering to Captain Sherard Osborn, whose experience in the exploration of Chinese rivers is so well known, that the Government of Peking should have selected him for the command of this force; and there can be no doubt that, with the means thus placed at his disposal, he will very soon rid the country of a scourge, the terrible nature of which can only be realized by those who have witnessed its disastrous effects.

LAURENCE OLIPHANT.

EXTRACT FROM THE PRIVATE MEMOIRS OF A PERSON IN A PUBLIC SITUATION.

On looking back at what I have written, and observing how large a proportion of those I have had occasion to mention, I have been obliged to speak of with reprobation or contempt, it occurs to me to ask myself, how is this? Is it that the world is really so much worse than most people think? Or that I look at it with a jaundiced eye?

On reflection, I am satisfied that it is merely this, that I have been much concerned in important *public* transactions; and that it is in these that a man can render himself so much more, and more easily, conspicuous by knavery or folly, or misconduct of some kind, than by good conduct. "The wheel that's weak is apt to creak." As long as matters go on smoothly and rightly, they attract little or no notice, and furnish, as is proverbial, so little matter for history, that fifty years of peace and prosperity will not occupy so many pages as five of wars and troubles. As soon as anything goes wrong, our attention is called to it; and there is hardly any one so contemptible in ability, or even in situation, that has it not in his power to cause something to go wrong. Ordinary men, if they do their duty well, attract no notice except among their personal intimates. It is only here and there a man possessing very extraordinary powers—and that, too, combined with peculiar opportunities—that can gain any *distinction* among men by doing good. "Inventas aut qui vitam excoluere per artes, quique sui memores alios fecere merendo." But on the other hand, almost everybody has both capacity and opportunities for doing *mischief*. "Dead flies cause the

precious ointment to stink." A ploughman who lives a life of peaceful and honest industry is never heard of beyond his own hamlet; but arson or murder may cause him to be talked about over great part of the kingdom. And there is many a quiet and highly useful clergyman labouring modestly in his own parish, whom one would never have occasion to mention in any record of public affairs; but two or three mischievous fanatics or demagogues, without having superior ability, or even labouring harder, may fill many a page of history.

It is not, therefore, to be inferred from what I have written, either that knaves and fools are much more abundant than men of worth, and sense; nor yet again that I think worse of mankind than others do; but that I have been engaged in a multitude of *public* transactions, in which none but men of very superior powers, and not always they, could *distinguish* themselves for good; while, for mischief, almost every one has capacity and opportunities. As for those who take what is considered as a more good-humoured view of the world, and seldom find fault with any one, as far as my observation goes, I should say that most of them *think far worse* of mankind than I do. At first sight this is a paradox; but if any one examines closely, he will find that it is so. He will find that the majority of those who are pretty well satisfied with men as they find them, do in reality disbelieve the existence of such a thing as an honest man; I mean, of what really deserves to be called so. They censure none but

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A visit to the Taipings.



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